



A Review of Studies on the Development of Porcelain Cognition in English-Speaking Countries from the Perspective of Cultural Representation Theory

Songcheng Tang

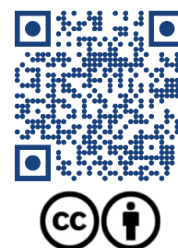
Department of English Studies, Beijing International Studies University, Beijing, China

Received: 13 Feb 2026; Received in revised form: 11 Mar 2026; Accepted: 15 Mar 2026; Available online: 19 Mar 2026

©2026 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open-access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract— In recent years, research on the cross-cultural dissemination of Chinese porcelain has grown significantly both in China and abroad, producing an increasing number of scholarly contributions. Cultural Representation Theory, as an important analytical perspective, is frequently employed to reveal the processes of identity construction and ideological formation underlying material culture. By reviewing studies on the development of porcelain cognition in English-speaking countries, scholars can better understand how porcelain has continuously transformed its meanings through historical trade circulation, social representation, museum exhibitions, and media discourse. Such research also helps illuminate the mechanisms of cultural interaction and cognition embedded in these processes. Based on academic studies published between 2020 and 2025, this review finds that research in English-speaking countries has gradually shifted from traditional art-historical approaches toward issues of identity, power, and cultural imagination, emphasizing the symbolic role of porcelain in shaping the image of the “Orient.” In contrast, Chinese scholarship tends to focus on cross-cultural communication and the construction of national image, exploring strategies for international communication and the cultural value of porcelain. Overall, research in English-speaking countries demonstrates stronger theoretical and critical orientations, while Chinese scholarship shows a more practice-oriented focus. These two perspectives are therefore complementary in terms of both analytical frameworks and research methods. This study not only expands the application of cultural representation theory in the field of material culture studies but also provides practical insights for the international communication of Chinese cultural products and for China’s broader cultural outreach strategy.



Keywords— porcelain, cultural representation, perception in English-speaking countries, cross-cultural communication

I. INTRODUCTION

The core ideas of cultural representation theory originate from linguistics and semiotics in the mid-to-late twentieth century. Its theoretical foundation is rooted in

the British cultural studies tradition, which explores the relationship between culture and power. The theory primarily focuses on language, symbols, and media texts as objects of analysis, emphasizing that meaning is not

inherently given but is continuously constructed and reproduced through representation systems within specific social contexts. In other words, culture can be understood as a “constructed reality,” in which every symbol carries particular social values and ideological implications.

In his influential works on cultural studies, Stuart Hall argues that representation is both the process through which meaning is produced and an expression of social power relations (Hall, 1997). This theoretical perspective encourages scholars to move beyond the purely material aspects of cultural phenomena and instead examine how meanings are assigned in different contexts and how these meanings influence people’s cognition and the construction of social identity.

According to Zhou Xian (2015), research on cultural representation has remained active in both domestic and international academia, and its theoretical frameworks and methodologies have been widely used to explain the production and dissemination of cultural meanings. As one of the most representative cultural symbols of Chinese civilization, porcelain has entered the Western world through trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchanges since the sixteenth century and has gradually become an important carrier of cross-cultural imagination and cognition.

In English-speaking countries, porcelain is not only regarded as an artistic object and collectible item but also serves as an important medium for constructing the imagination of the “Orient” and shaping the image of China. The perception of porcelain in these societies has not developed in a linear manner; rather, it has evolved alongside colonial expansion, transnational trade, museum collection practices, and contemporary multicultural contexts (Finlay, 2010). The discursive expressions, aesthetic values, and cultural evaluations associated with porcelain reflect the diverse attitudes of English-speaking societies toward China and its civilization. From this perspective, examining the development of porcelain cognition in English-speaking countries through the lens of cultural representation theory helps reveal the ways in which identities are constructed in cross-cultural interactions and provides a distinctive perspective for understanding cultural exchanges between China and the West.

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance. On the theoretical level, cultural representation theory provides a new analytical perspective for examining the production of meaning in material culture. Through this lens, porcelain is no longer viewed merely as a craft product or a commodity in international trade but as an important symbol in the construction of identity and ideology within cross-cultural communication. By reviewing the evolution of porcelain representations in English-language contexts, this study not only expands the application of cultural representation theory within material culture studies but also deepens our understanding of cultural interactions between China and the West.

On the practical level, as China continues to promote its cultural “going global” strategy, porcelain—due to its strong cultural recognizability—has become an important medium for presenting national image and promoting mutual learning among civilizations. This research may provide discursive insights for the international communication of Chinese cultural products and offer references for relevant institutions and communication actors seeking to construct a more inclusive and culturally meaningful “Chinese narrative” within the global context.

Through a review of existing studies, the author finds that research specifically examining the development of porcelain cognition in English-speaking countries from the perspective of cultural representation remains relatively limited. Most existing literature focuses on historical archaeology, art history, or Sino-Western trade history, while systematic discussions of porcelain as a cultural symbol within dynamic representation processes are still lacking. Therefore, conducting a literature review in this field is of considerable significance.

This report is organized into three main parts. First, it briefly introduces the historical development of cultural representation theory. Second, it outlines the theoretical framework of cultural representation theory and summarizes the common research topics or objects found in the relevant literature. Finally, it reviews studies applying cultural representation theory to the development of porcelain cognition.

To systematically examine the relevant literature, this study adopts a combination of thematic search, keyword search, and manual screening. Domestic studies were

mainly collected from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, using keywords such as “cultural representation,” “porcelain,” “cross-cultural communication,” and “cultural image.” Foreign literature was retrieved from databases such as ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis, and JSTOR using keywords including “Cultural Representation of Porcelain,” “Chinese Porcelain Discourse,” “Porcelain in Western Perception,” and “Representation in Media.” Priority was given to studies closely related to the cultural representation and communicative perception of porcelain in English-language contexts.

The time span of this review covers the period from 2020 to 2025. During these years, the global landscape of international communication and cultural exchange has undergone significant changes. On the one hand, under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions, Western media have adopted increasingly complex discursive strategies in cultural reporting and image construction. For example, during and after the pandemic, media outlets such as The New York Times and the BBC frequently placed traditional Chinese symbols—including porcelain, silk, and tea—within narratives of the “Orient” when reporting on Chinese culture and society, thereby constructing cultural imaginations of Chinese civilization (Li & Tang, 2025). Meanwhile, Chinese media such as China Daily and the Global Times have promoted themes such as “Guochao” (national cultural trend) and “culture going global” to strengthen narratives of cultural confidence and civilizational dialogue.

On the other hand, the application of cultural representation theory in digital communication and discourse studies has continued to deepen. Scholars have increasingly adopted corpus analysis and multimodal analysis to examine the cross-cultural re-representation of Chinese porcelain on social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok (Liu & Qiu, 2024). These studies demonstrate emerging research trends that cross linguistic and media boundaries.

At the same time, with the ongoing promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative and China’s cultural outreach strategy, a series of international exhibitions and collaborative projects—such as the British Museum’s

exhibitions on Chinese ceramics and the National Museum of China’s Silk Road civilization exhibitions—have brought renewed global attention to porcelain and generated new interpretations of its cultural significance. Therefore, selecting the period from 2020 to 2025 allows this study to capture the latest developments in cultural representation research and reveal new trends in the contemporary perception of porcelain in English-language contexts.

II. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

Scholars both in China and abroad have examined cultural representation theory from multiple perspectives. These studies have contributed to the development of the theory and facilitated its application across different academic fields.

2.1 Major Development of Cultural Representation Theory in Western Scholarship

The intellectual origins of cultural representation theory span from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, drawing primarily from semiotics and structuralist thought. As early as the nineteenth century, Charles Sanders Peirce proposed a triadic model of the sign, which expanded scholarly understanding of the mechanisms through which meaning is generated (Peirce, 1867). In the early twentieth century, Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the concept that language is a system of signs, emphasizing that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and socially constructed (Saussure, 1916). This insight laid an important semiotic foundation for later studies of cultural representation.

By the mid-twentieth century, structuralist scholars such as Claude Lévi-Strauss further developed these ideas through the analysis of myth and cultural patterns, revealing the deep structures underlying cultural meaning (Lévi-Strauss, 1963). These early theoretical contributions provided essential methodological resources for subsequent research on cultural representation.

In the 1970s, cultural studies emerged as a distinct academic field under the influence of the Birmingham School in the United Kingdom. Stuart Hall became one of the most influential figures in the development of cultural

representation theory. Hall argued that representation is not merely a reflection of objective reality but rather a process through which societies construct meaning through language, media, and symbolic systems (Hall, 1973). In his view, meaning is not fixed but continuously produced and reconstructed within social interactions and power relations.

Hall's encoding/decoding model further demonstrates that meaning in communication is not transmitted in a one-directional manner. Instead, audiences interpret messages differently according to their cultural background and social position. This theoretical development marked a shift in representation studies from structuralist semiotics toward a stronger focus on social practice and ideology.

During the 1980s and 1990s, cultural representation theory became closely intertwined with post-structuralism, postcolonial theory, and feminist scholarship, which further enriched its theoretical depth and interdisciplinary influence. Michel Foucault's discourse theory highlighted the relationship between knowledge and power, suggesting that representation is fundamentally a form of power practice (Foucault, 1972). Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* analyzed Western representations of the East and revealed the colonial discourse underlying such representations (Said, 1978).

Scholars such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha expanded representation studies within postcolonial contexts by emphasizing the voices and identities of marginalized groups (Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994). These theoretical developments not only enriched the conceptual framework of cultural representation but also positioned it as an important tool for critiquing cultural hegemony and social inequality.

Entering the twenty-first century, the application of cultural representation theory has become increasingly interdisciplinary. Hall's theoretical framework outlined in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* remains a foundational reference, particularly its constructivist view that meaning is produced through representational systems (Hall, 1997).

With the intensification of globalization, scholars have begun to pay closer attention to representation in transnational cultural flows. Arjun Appadurai's theory of

global cultural flows has been widely adopted to explain the dynamic construction of cultural meanings in cross-border cultural exchange (Appadurai, 1996). At the same time, new methodological approaches have expanded the scope of representation studies.

For example, Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal discourse analysis framework provides effective tools for examining visual culture, digital communication, and cross-cultural interaction (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001). Scholars such as Jewitt (2016) have further demonstrated how images, language, and other semiotic resources interact in the production of meaning.

Overall, research in the twenty-first century builds upon Hall's theoretical foundation while incorporating globalization theory and multimodal analysis. As a result, cultural representation theory has developed into a more open, diverse, and interdisciplinary field in contemporary academic research.

In addition, Western scholarship has increasingly emphasized the relationship between cultural representation and identity construction. Hall introduced the concept of the "cultural representation of identity," arguing that identity is not fixed but constantly reconstructed through representational practices. Media play a crucial role in this process, functioning both as channels of cultural communication and as spaces where social identities are constructed (Hall, 1996).

Recent studies have also connected cultural representation with issues of race, gender, and class. For instance, bell hooks examined the representation of African Americans within mainstream cultural discourse (Hooks, 2000), while Rosalind Gill explored the representation of women in advertising and media culture (Gill, 2007). These studies have further contributed to the diversification of cultural representation research.

In summary, the development of cultural representation theory in Western academia can be roughly divided into three stages. The first stage, emerging in the mid-twentieth century, focused on semiotics and structuralism, laying the theoretical foundation for the study of symbols and meaning. The second stage, from the 1970s to the 1990s, represented a period of critical expansion characterized by the influence of the Birmingham School, discourse theory, and postcolonial

studies. The third stage, beginning in the twenty-first century, is marked by interdisciplinary applications that integrate representation theory with globalization studies, multimodal communication, and identity research.

This intellectual trajectory provides important theoretical support for analyzing specific cultural phenomena, such as the perception and representation of Chinese porcelain in cross-cultural contexts.

2.2 Major Development of Cultural Representation Theory in Chinese Scholarship

Compared with Western academia, research on cultural representation theory in China began relatively later. However, over the past two decades it has developed rapidly, gradually forming a clear trajectory from theoretical introduction to localized application and further interdisciplinary expansion. In general, Chinese scholars have drawn upon Western theoretical achievements while exploring the applicability of cultural representation in Chinese contexts, particularly in fields such as media communication, translation studies, artistic representation, cultural heritage, and national image construction. The development of this research can roughly be divided into three stages: theoretical introduction, applied expansion, and localized innovation.

During the initial stage, from the late 1990s to the early 2010s, studies mainly focused on introducing and interpreting the theoretical foundations of cultural representation. Chen Guoming (1998) was among the first scholars to introduce Stuart Hall's cultural representation theory into the field of intercultural communication studies in China. He emphasized the role of cultural symbols in the production of meaning and argued that cultural products are not neutral material objects but embodiments of social values and ideological meanings. Subsequently, Fan Hong (2013) further elaborated on the central proposition that representation is a process of producing and reproducing meaning, providing an important theoretical basis for the development of cultural representation studies in China. Research in this stage primarily concentrated on translating and interpreting theoretical concepts, while empirical applications remained relatively limited.

From the mid-2010s to around 2020, cultural representation theory gradually moved beyond theoretical

interpretation toward practical application. Scholars began to combine the theory with fields such as media studies, cultural communication, and artistic representation, forming a multidimensional research framework. As early as the beginning of the twenty-first century, Xin Bin (2000) integrated cultural representation with critical discourse analysis, examining the relationship between language, symbols, and power in news discourse. Later studies further expanded the scope of application. For example, Wang Bingxue (2015) argued that transnational film texts often reproduce cultural identities through strategies of differentiation, thereby reshaping representations of the "Other." Xiao Jun (2017) pointed out that multimodal analysis can reveal how meanings are generated and how cultural differences are represented in new media discourse, which further expanded the methodological space for representation studies.

Similarly, Chen Shilun and Wang Yiwei (2019) applied cultural representation theory to the analysis of media reports on the Belt and Road Initiative, revealing the narrative construction of cultural symbols in international communication. Zou Xiaosong (2021), from the perspective of ceramic art studies, proposed that the forms and decorative patterns of porcelain are not merely aesthetic expressions but symbolic practices shaped by specific social contexts. These studies not only broadened the application scenarios of cultural representation theory but also promoted its interdisciplinary integration.

Since 2020, research on cultural representation in China has entered a stage characterized by deeper exploration and methodological innovation. One notable feature of recent studies is the increasing use of digital methods and cross-media analysis. Liu Shiping and Wang Aihong (2021), for example, examined porcelain used in Chinese state banquets and interpreted its symbolic meaning within diplomatic contexts. Yuan Hong and Xu Dahai (2023) proposed the concept of a "ceramic cultural sphere," expanding the spatial dimension of cultural representation research by examining ceramics within the broader context of regional cultural exchange and civilizational interaction.

In addition, Li Mengjie, Feng Dezheng, and Deng Yi (2024) emphasized the importance of multimodal discourse in cross-cultural communication and social

cognition, highlighting how visual and linguistic resources jointly shape cultural meaning. Xing Liju and Yan Chuanruolan (2022), as well as Jiang Lifu and Zhang Longxi (2025), focused on the role of cultural representation in the construction of national image within international communication. Their studies explored how cultural meanings are continuously reconstructed and disseminated across different cultural contexts. Su Chang (2024) examined the international communication of intangible cultural heritage, analyzing how cultural symbols are interpreted differently by diverse audience groups.

Furthermore, recent research has increasingly incorporated corpus-based methods into cultural representation studies. Cheng Fangmin and Xu Fuyijia (2024), for instance, used the NOW corpus to analyze the collocations and semantic tendencies of the terms “Chinese porcelain” and “Chinese ceramic” in international media discourse. Their findings revealed subtle variations in how Chinese cultural symbols are represented in foreign media narratives.

Overall, research on cultural representation theory in China has gradually moved beyond simple theoretical introduction and has developed toward interdisciplinary integration, methodological diversification, and localized application. From the early stage of translating and interpreting Western theories, to the subsequent expansion into fields such as media studies, translation studies, and film studies, and finally to the more recent incorporation of research on art, cultural heritage, and national image construction, Chinese scholarship has established a relatively comprehensive development trajectory in the study of cultural representation.

Nevertheless, certain limitations remain when compared with Western research. First, critical analysis of power relations and ideological mechanisms is still relatively insufficient. Many studies tend to emphasize descriptive or interpretive approaches rather than critical examination of cultural hegemony. Second, cross-cultural comparative studies remain limited, as many investigations still focus primarily on the Chinese domestic context without fully incorporating the perspectives of foreign audiences or examining the dynamics of intercultural interaction. Third, the relative lack of audience-centered

research means that the processes of reception and interpretation in cultural representation have not yet been comprehensively explored.

These limitations also point toward possible directions for future research. While maintaining localized perspectives, scholars should further emphasize cross-cultural dialogue and integrate multiple methodological approaches. By doing so, research on cultural representation in China can continue to develop toward a more sophisticated and globally engaged academic framework.

III. STUDIES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PORCELAIN PERCEPTION BASED ON CULTURAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

Through a systematic review of relevant literature, the present study categorizes research on the development of porcelain perception in English-speaking countries according to different research objects and analytical perspectives. These include the historical circulation of porcelain through early foreign trade, the construction of national image and cultural representation, museum exhibitions and institutional discourse practices, as well as the cultural significance of markets and collections. By examining how cultural representation theory has been applied within these areas, scholars have revealed how porcelain carries different identities across historical and social contexts and how these identities are shaped by broader ideological forces.

3.1 Theoretical Foundations

A review of existing studies shows that several theoretical frameworks are commonly used when analyzing the development of porcelain perception in English-speaking countries. These frameworks include cultural representation theory, Orientalism, the cultural biography of objects, and museum discourse theory, among which cultural representation theory occupies the central position.

As discussed earlier, Stuart Hall’s theory of cultural representation conceptualizes representation as a process of meaning production in which language, images, and institutional practices play crucial roles (Hall, 1997). This perspective helps explain how porcelain has been continuously encoded in English-speaking societies as a

symbol of the “Orient,” elegance, refinement, or civilizational achievement.

Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism further reveals the power logic and processes of othering that underlie Western constructions of the “Orient” (Said, 1978). This theoretical framework suggests that Western descriptions and displays of Chinese porcelain often contain elements of exoticization and imagination. Applying this perspective enables scholars to uncover the ideological mechanisms embedded within the representation of porcelain.

At the same time, the concept of the “cultural biography of objects,” proposed by Igor Kopytoff and further developed by Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, emphasizes that objects undergo multiple stages of social life during their circulation. The meanings attached to objects change as they move through different social contexts. This theoretical framework therefore provides an effective tool for analyzing how porcelain in English-speaking countries has shifted from a trade commodity to a collectible artifact and eventually to

museum heritage (Kopytoff, 1986; Gosden & Marshall, 1999).

In addition, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill’s research on museum discourse highlights that exhibition narratives, labeling practices, and spatial arrangements are not merely methods of presenting knowledge but also institutional processes that shape public understanding. Museums in Western countries construct the cultural meanings of porcelain through such practices, thereby influencing how audiences interpret these objects (Greenhill, 1992; 1995).

Taken together, cultural representation theory provides the overarching analytical framework for this study. Theories of Orientalism, the cultural biography of objects, and museum discourse complement this framework by examining representation from the perspectives of power relations, the life histories of material objects, and institutional practices. Together they form the theoretical foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which porcelain perception has developed in English-speaking societies (Shown in Figure 1).

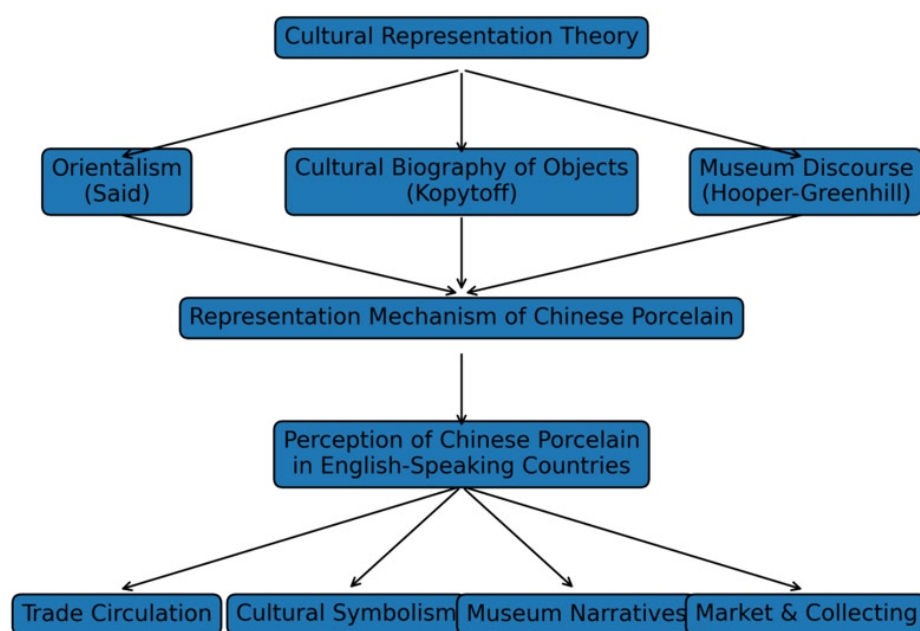


Fig.1. Conceptual Framework for the Study of Chinese Porcelain Perception in English-Speaking Countries.

3.2 Research Content

Different research approaches can lead to different interpretations of cultural representation. Based on the existing literature, current studies on the development of porcelain perception in English-speaking countries mainly

focus on four aspects: historical circulation and trade background, cultural representation and identity construction, museum exhibitions and institutional discourse, as well as market collecting and media communication.

First, in terms of historical trade circulation, scholars have examined how Chinese export porcelain entered European and American markets and how it was received within Western cultural contexts. Carswell (1985; 2000) and Frelinghuysen and Le Corbeiller (2003), among others, systematically documented the routes through which Chinese export porcelain spread to Europe and North America, as well as the stylistic transformations and processes of cultural reception associated with its circulation. These studies emphasize the role of porcelain as a transnational commodity that facilitated cross-cultural exchange.

Second, research on cultural representation and identity construction highlights that porcelain is not merely a material object of consumption but also an important symbol within cross-cultural imagination. Ni Aizhen (2022) argues that Chinese export porcelain and the decorative style of Chinoiserie in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries constituted a key channel through which Western societies perceived and represented China. Similarly, Hospodor's study reveals that Chinese porcelain in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America functioned not only as a luxury commodity but also as a symbol of wealth, social status, and cultural identity (Hospodor, 2023).

Third, museum exhibitions and institutional discourse have become a major focus of recent research. According to Hooper-Greenhill's museum discourse theory, exhibition narratives and curatorial texts do not merely present historical knowledge but actively shape public understanding through institutional practices (Greenhill, 1992; 1995). For example, the exhibition *China Trade Porcelain: Patterns of Exchange* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art examined the transformation of Chinese export porcelain within global trade networks (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2023). Likewise, the 2025 exhibition *China from China* at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum reinterpreted porcelain within the historical context of early American trade with China, thereby assigning new historical and social meanings to these artifacts.

Finally, research on markets and collections has explored the cultural meanings attached to porcelain objects in Western social contexts. Through archaeological research on Chinese export porcelain excavated in

Charleston, Leath (1999) demonstrated the widespread use of porcelain in colonial America and its adaptation to local aesthetic preferences. Similarly, a study by the Chipstone Foundation analyzed two Chinese porcelain punch bowls, illustrating how porcelain objects were embedded within social gatherings and historical memory, thereby contributing to identity construction in American society (Chipstone, 2023).

In addition, some scholars have begun to incorporate media and corpus-based approaches into porcelain studies. Cheng Fangmin and Xu Fuyijia (2024), for instance, used the NOW corpus to analyze the collocations and semantic tendencies of the terms "Chinese porcelain" and "Chinese ceramic" in international media discourse. Their findings indicate that international media often describe Chinese porcelain primarily in terms of commercial value and practical function. This semantic tendency reflects the dominant perception of porcelain in international society as a trade commodity and collectible item, while relatively less attention is paid to its historical and cultural significance.

3.3 Literature Review of Cultural Representation Studies on Porcelain Perception

3.3.1 Research in English-speaking Countries in the Past Five Years

Over the past five years, research and exhibitions concerning Chinese porcelain in English-speaking countries have gradually shifted from traditional approaches in art history and trade history toward broader themes such as identity construction, power relations, and cultural imagination. Porcelain is no longer regarded merely as an exquisite craft object or a commodity of international trade; instead, it is increasingly interpreted as a symbol that carries complex cultural meanings.

First, museum exhibitions have become important platforms for reshaping the cultural image of porcelain in recent years. In 2025, the Lyman Allyn Art Museum in Connecticut launched the exhibition *China from China: Porcelain and Stories of Early American Trade*, which presented porcelain, silk, tea, and other artifacts within the historical context of early trade relations between the United States and China. The exhibition highlighted the symbolic significance of porcelain during the colonial and early national periods in the United States: it represented

both the aspiration for an international lifestyle and the Western imagination of Chinese craftsmanship and culture (Lyman Allyn Art Museum, 2025).

In the same year, the Metropolitan Museum of Art organized the exhibition *Monstrous Beauty: A Feminist Revision of Chinoiserie*, which reexamined porcelain elements within the tradition of Chinoiserie. The exhibition explored how these elements were intertwined with discourses of Orientalism, gender, and power (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2025). Meanwhile, the exhibition *Stephanie Shih: Long Time No See* held by the Washington and Lee University Museums between 2024 and 2025 presented contemporary artworks that incorporated porcelain as a medium. Through the artist's creations, porcelain was linked with Chinese American identity, diasporic memory, and cultural absence, demonstrating how porcelain functions as a representation of cultural memory and ethnic identity in contemporary American society (Washington and Lee University Museums, 2024).

These exhibitions illustrate how museums in English-speaking countries not only document historical trade relations but also actively construct contemporary public understandings of Chinese porcelain through exhibition narratives.

Second, recent academic research has expanded the cultural representation dimension of porcelain studies. Hospodor (2023) points out that Chinese porcelain in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America was not only a material commodity but also a symbol of wealth and social status. Its use in banquets and domestic settings reflected American admiration for Chinese craftsmanship while simultaneously revealing the passive positioning of Eastern culture within Western discourse systems. Such analysis suggests that the cross-cultural circulation of porcelain itself constitutes a process of reproducing identity and power relations.

Similarly, a 2023 study by the Chipstone Foundation examined two Chinese porcelain punch bowls and revealed how porcelain objects functioned in American social gatherings and historical memory. The study demonstrated that porcelain played a significant role in shaping community identity and social relationships (Chipstone, 2023). These studies collectively indicate that

porcelain should be understood not merely as a product of material exchange but as a central symbol in processes of cultural representation and identity construction.

At the same time, new research has emerged on the cross-cultural dissemination of blue-and-white porcelain. Gu and colleagues (2025) argue that blue-and-white porcelain underwent a process of cultural re-creation during its circulation across cultures. Its decorative motifs and forms were imitated and adapted within Western design traditions, ultimately producing a hybrid aesthetic style. This process of “cultural translation” not only influenced European and American design history but also endowed porcelain with a dual identity in Western societies: it remained a symbol of Eastern tradition while simultaneously conforming to Western aesthetic preferences.

In the field of museum collection studies, Glaister (2025) analyzed the Ionides Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum and found that some Chinese export porcelains were reclassified as “European-style” objects in Western museum systems. Through this process of renaming and reclassification, the cultural identity of these objects was transformed from “Chinese-made” artifacts into elements of Western collections. This research highlights the power of museums as institutions of knowledge production: museums not only preserve artifacts but also shape their cultural identities and meanings through discursive practices.

Furthermore, recent studies have also examined the relationship between the material form of porcelain and its social functions. Sargent (2025) notes that Chinese export porcelain collected in eighteenth-century America reflects aesthetic interactions between Chinese and Western design traditions in both form and decoration. At the same time, these objects were used in social gatherings as symbols of cultural exchange and social status, demonstrating the close connection between the material characteristics of porcelain and its social meanings. Similarly, Zhang Ran (2023) argues that the reclassification and reinterpretation of Chinese porcelain in different markets reveal the unequal distribution of cultural authority in cross-cultural interactions.

Overall, research and exhibitions on Chinese porcelain in English-speaking countries over the past five

years exhibit three major characteristics. First, historical and exhibition studies increasingly emphasize porcelain's role within discourses of identity and power. For example, exhibitions such as *China from China* and studies by Hospodor demonstrate that porcelain functions as a symbol of social status and national image. Second, cross-cultural reinterpretation has become a major focus, as scholars highlight how the meaning of porcelain is continuously redefined in intercultural exchanges. Third, research methodologies have become increasingly diverse, expanding from traditional art historical approaches to include discourse analysis, morphological analysis, and exhibition text criticism.

Nevertheless, several limitations remain. Empirical studies on how audiences interpret representations of porcelain are still relatively rare. In addition, the representation of porcelain on digital media and social platforms has not yet been systematically explored. Finally, comparative research examining how different social groups within English-speaking societies perceive porcelain remains limited. Future research could therefore focus on audience reception studies, digital humanities approaches, and cross-cultural comparative perspectives in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which porcelain is represented in contemporary cultural contexts.

3.3.2 Research in China in the Past Five Years

Over the past five years, research on porcelain in China has gradually expanded from traditional studies of craft history, archaeology, and art history to include perspectives of cultural representation and cross-cultural communication. Scholars increasingly emphasize that porcelain should be understood not merely as a physical artifact but as a symbol that carries national image, identity construction, and cultural discourse power. With the promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative and the broader strategy of "Chinese culture going global," porcelain has become an important subject of discussion in both academic and cultural sectors, and its modes of dissemination and perception have demonstrated new scholarly trends.

First, scholars have highlighted the symbolic role of porcelain in international cultural communication. Wang Tingxin (2022) argues that the inheritance and

dissemination of porcelain culture involve not only the continuation of craftsmanship but also the construction of cultural values and cultural confidence. He particularly notes that the historical appreciation of porcelain in Europe demonstrates how porcelain often functions as a symbol of civilization within cross-cultural contexts. This perspective provides an important theoretical lens for understanding how porcelain is endowed with cultural meanings that transcend its material form.

Second, studies focusing on communication practices have also become increasingly prominent. In 2023, Dehua white porcelain was presented in international touring exhibitions in countries such as the United States and Mexico. These exhibitions not only increased international media exposure but also contributed to a growth in overseas orders. From the perspective of cultural representation, such exhibitions can be understood as processes through which narratives and media discourse jointly shape Dehua porcelain as a symbol of Chinese cultural identity. This case demonstrates that Chinese scholars have begun to recognize how porcelain acquires representational functions within international exhibitions and communication contexts.

Third, researchers have increasingly examined the influence of new media platforms on the representation of porcelain culture. Zhao Na (2025) notes that platforms such as Douyin and Weibo provide new channels for promoting Jingdezhen porcelain culture. Through short videos, live-streaming commerce, and user-generated content, porcelain has been repackaged as part of the "Guochao" cultural trend and associated with new forms of cultural identity among younger audiences. This digital mode of communication not only reshapes domestic perceptions of porcelain but also offers new possibilities for its international dissemination.

In addition, museum exhibitions and academic conferences have become important venues for the development of porcelain research in China. In 2023, the International Alliance for Ceramic Studies was established in Jingdezhen, bringing together scholars from different countries to discuss topics such as the origins, dissemination, and globalization of porcelain culture. Participants emphasized porcelain's function as a "global

language,” highlighting its role in identity construction within cross-cultural communication.

Similarly, Jingdezhen Ceramic University launched a micro-program in “International Communication of Chinese Ceramic Culture” in 2024. Through educational initiatives and exhibitions such as Only Qingbai, the program sought to promote new narratives of porcelain culture in global contexts. These initiatives demonstrate that Chinese academia has begun to apply cultural representation theory to educational and exhibition practices, thereby strengthening the narrative potential of porcelain on the international stage.

From a methodological perspective, research on porcelain in China over the past five years has also become increasingly diversified. Although traditional literature-based analysis remains dominant, more scholars are integrating cultural representation theory with communication studies and adopting interdisciplinary approaches. For instance, Liu Yichan and Li Yongchang (2024) employed multimodal analysis to examine interactive museum experiences, showing how lighting, spatial design, and digital technology contribute to the construction of porcelain’s cultural image within exhibition spaces.

Overall, recent research on porcelain in China demonstrates several notable trends. First, research topics have expanded from craftsmanship and aesthetics to include identity construction, cultural image, and cultural representation, emphasizing the role of porcelain in national image building and cross-cultural communication. Second, research objects have become increasingly diverse, extending beyond traditional porcelain centers such as Jingdezhen and Dehua to include museum exhibitions, digital media platforms, and international touring exhibitions. Third, research methods have become more interdisciplinary, combining discourse analysis, multimodal studies, communication research, and cultural industry analysis.

However, several limitations remain. Although scholars frequently emphasize international communication, most studies still focus primarily on the domestic perspective and lack empirical investigations of overseas audiences. Furthermore, many studies rely on descriptive case analyses rather than developing systematic

theoretical innovations or methodological frameworks. Finally, research specifically focusing on English-speaking contexts remains relatively limited. Existing studies tend to emphasize Europe or countries along the Belt and Road Initiative, while the specific social contexts of porcelain dissemination and perception in English-speaking societies have not been sufficiently explored.

Future research should therefore strengthen cross-cultural comparative approaches, particularly through empirical studies in countries such as the United States and Australia, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how porcelain is represented and perceived in international cultural communication.

IV. CONCLUSION

From the perspective of cultural representation theory, this study reviews research conducted over the past five years on the development of porcelain perception in English-speaking countries. Overall, porcelain is no longer understood merely as a craft product or a trade commodity; instead, it has increasingly been interpreted as an important symbol of identity construction and cultural representation.

Research in Western academia tends to focus on museum exhibitions and theoretical discussions, emphasizing the role of porcelain as an “Oriental symbol” within discourses of identity politics and power relations. Methodologically, these studies combine approaches from art history, discourse analysis, and multimodal research, demonstrating strong critical and interdisciplinary characteristics. In contrast, Chinese scholarship is more closely connected to national cultural strategies. From traditional porcelain production centers such as Jingdezhen and Dehua to new media communication and international touring exhibitions, Chinese studies generally highlight the role of porcelain in promoting cultural confidence and constructing national image. However, compared with Western scholarship, Chinese research often remains descriptive in nature, with relatively limited empirical investigation and theoretical innovation.

The two research traditions therefore display distinct orientations. Western studies emphasize critical perspectives, while Chinese research focuses more on

practical applications. At the same time, these differences reveal potential areas for complementarity. In particular, empirical studies on how contemporary societies in English-speaking countries perceive porcelain remain limited in both Chinese and Western scholarship.

Future research should therefore strengthen cross-cultural comparative analysis, expand the audience-oriented perspective, and pay greater attention to digital media environments. Such efforts would help reveal more comprehensively the mechanisms through which porcelain is represented and understood in contemporary global contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported in part by a grant from the cultivation program on Area Studies by Beijing International Studies University (3009/11122026308).

REFERENCES

- [1] Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. UMN : University of Minnesota Press.
- [2] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- [3] Carswell, J. (1985). *Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and Its Impact on the Western World*. Chicago:David and AlfredSmart Gallery, University of Chicago.
- [4] Carswell, J. (2000). *Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain Around the World*. London: British Museum Press.
- [5] Chipstone Foundation. (2023). A tale of two Chinese porcelain punch bowls. <https://chipstone.org/article.php/885/Ceramics-in-America-2023/A-Tale-of-Two-Chinese-Porcelain-Punch-Bowls>.
- [6] Chen, H., Jia, H., & Liu, L. (2025). Systematic morphological analysis and stylistic cultural interpretation of Song Dynasty Longquan Porcelain Vases. *npj Heritage Science*, Volume 13, Issue 1. 423.
- [7] Finlay, R. (2010). *The Pilgrim Art: The Culture of Porcelain in World History*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- [8] Foucault, M. (1972) . *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- [9] Frelinghuysen, A. C., & Le Corbeiller, C. (2003). *Chinese Export Porcelain*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- [10] Gill, R. (2007). *Gender and the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- [11] Glaister, H. (2025). Understanding European style Chinese export porcelain in Western collections: The Ionides Collection at the V&A. *Journal of International Ceramic Studies*, Volume 11, Issue 1, 1-28.
- [12] Gosden, C., & Marshall, Y. (1999). The cultural biography of objects. *World Archaeology*. Volume 31, Issue 2, 169-178.
- [13] Greenhill, E. H. (1992). *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- [14] Greenhill, E. H. (1995). *Museum, Media, Message*. London: Routledge.
- [15] Gu, M., Chen, A. F., & Filipe, R. A. (2025). Blue-and-white porcelain: cross-cultural exchange and design innovation between China and Europe. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, Volume 12, Issue 1.
- [16] Hall, S. (1973). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, Media, Language*, p128-138. London: Hutchinson.
- [17] Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs 'identity' ? In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage.
- [18] Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.
- [19] Hooks, B. (2000). *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- [20] Hospodor, E. M. (2023). "The Product of that Finer Mould" : The Role of Chinese Porcelain in the Making of Early American Images of China. (Honors thesis, University of Mississippi).
- [21] Jewitt, C., Bezemer, J., & O' Halloran, K. (2016). *Introducing Multimodality*. London: Routledge.
- [22] Kopytoff, I. (1986). *The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process*. Cambridge University Press.
- [23] Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. London: Arnold.
- [24] Leath, R. A. (1999). "After the Chinese Taste" : Chinese Export Porcelain and Chinoiserie Design in Eighteen-Century Charleston. *Historical Archaeology*, Volume 33, Issue 3, 48-61.
- [25] Li, W., & Tang, S. (2025). Comparative Study of Chinese and Western Cultural Heritage Reporting: A CDS Perspective. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, Volume 10, Issue 3, 311–323.
- [26] Liu, X., Qiu, X., & Qiu, W. (2024). Research on international communication of Chinese ceramic culture on social media. *Academic Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, Volume 7, Issue 9, 164–169.

- [27] Lévi-Strauss, C. (1963). *Structural Anthropology*. London: Routledge.
- [28] Lyman Allyn Art Museum. (2025). *China from China: Porcelain and stories of early American trade*. Lyman Allyn Art Museum.
- [29] Metropolitan Museum of Art. (2023). *China Trade Porcelain: Patterns of Exchange*. The Met, New York.
- [30] Metropolitan Museum of Art. (2025). *Monstrous beauty: A feminist revision of Chinoiserie*. The Met, New York.
- [31] Peirce, C. S. (1867). *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotics*. University of North Carolina Press.
- [32] Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- [33] Sargent, W, R. (2025). Understanding Chinese export ceramics through Western paintings and prints. *Journal of International Ceramic Studies*. Volume 2, Issue 3, 15-26.
- [34] Saussure, F. de. (1916). *Cours de linguistique générale*. Paris: Payot.
- [35] Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- [36] Washington and Lee University Museums. (2024). *Stephanie Shih: Long time no see*. Washington and Lee University, Lexington.
- [37] Zhang, R. (2023). Chinese ceramics as global commodities: a thousand years of
- [38] production and trade of Chinese ceramics in the Western Indian. *World Archaeology*. Volume 55, Issue 3, 357–374.
- [39] Cheng Fangmin, Xu Fuyijia, 2024, Research on the International Image Communication of Chinese Ceramics Based on the NOW Corpus. *Modern Linguistics* (12), 546–555.
- [40] Chen Guoming, 2009, *Intercultural Communication*. East China Normal University Press.
- [41] Chen Shilun, Wang Yiwei, 2019, Media Reporting Frames and the Construction of China's Overseas Image. *Journal of Guangxi Minzu University*, 41(1), 148–157.
- [42] Fan Hong, 2013, The Multidimensional Construction of National Image and Communication Strategies. *Journal of Tsinghua University* (2), 141–152+161.
- [43] Jiang Lifu, Zhang Longxi, 2025, Research on China's Image from a Cross-Cultural Perspective: An Interview with Professor Zhang Longxi. *Shandong Foreign Language Teaching* (2), 24–35.
- [44] Li Mengjie, Feng Dezheng, Deng Yi, 2024, Advances and Frontiers in International Multimodal Discourse Analysis. *Modern Foreign Languages* (3), 419–430.
- [45] Liu Shiping, Wang Aihong, 2021, Image Representation and Visual Construction of State Banquet Porcelain: A Review of “Studies on Traditional Chinese Ceramic Art”. *Science and Technology Management Research* (3), 170–178.
- [46] Liu Yichan, Li Yongchang, 2024, Research on Interactive Museum Experience Design from a Multimodal Perspective. *Design* (4), 61–63.
- [47] Ni Aizhen, 2022, “China on Porcelain”: Development and Function in Western Modernity. *Tianjin Social Sciences Press*
- [48] Su Chang, 2024, Digital Integration Promoting the International Communication of Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Chinese Social Sciences Today* (6), 45–49.
- [49] Xin Bin, 2000, Critical Linguistics and the Critical Analysis of English News Discourse. *Foreign Language Teaching* (4), 44–48.
- [50] Wang Bingxue, 2018, Cultural Cognition and Ideological Shaping in Chinese Film Production within Transnational Communication Contexts. *Contemporary Cinema* (6), 144–148.
- [51] Wang Tingxin, 2022, Cultural Reflections on the Inheritance and Dissemination of Porcelain. *Shandong Ceramics* (2), 1–5.
- [52] Xiao Jun, 2017, Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Theoretical Models and Methodological Implications for Cross-Cultural Communication Studies in New Media. *Journal of Wuhan University* (6), 126–134.
- [53] Xing Liju, Yan Chuanruolan, 2022, Research on the Construction Models of China's National Image. *Northeast Asia Forum* (6), 3–17+125.
- [54] Yuan Hong, Xu Dahai, 2023, A Review of Seventy Years of Ceramic Art Research (1949–2019). *Studies of Ethnic Arts*, 36(06), 36–48.
- [55] Zhao Na, 2025, Research on the Communication of Jingdezhen Ceramic Culture from the Perspective of New Media. *Media Observer*, 17(3), 112–118.
- [56] Zhou Xian, 2015, *Cultural Representation and Cultural Studies*. Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- [57] Zou Xiaosong, 2021, The Historical Formation and Contemporary Transformation of Ceramic Culture. *Jiangxi Social Sciences* (2), 246–254.